

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 551

To amend the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 to provide for supplemental assistance for COVID–19 relief, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 28, 2021

Ms. KUSTER (for herself, Mr. WELCH, Mrs. TRAHAN, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. JONES, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Ms. NORTON, Mr. McNERNEY, Ms. SEWELL, Mr. TONKO, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. KEATING, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. BLUMENAUER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Labor, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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# A BILL

To amend the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 to provide for supplemental assistance for COVID–19 relief, and for other purposes.

- 1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
- 2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
- 3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**
- 4       This Act may be cited as the “Energy Debt Relief
- 5       for American Families Act”.

1   **SEC. 2. ENERGY DEBT RELIEF FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES**

2                   **PROGRAM.**

3         (a) AUTHORIZATION.—Section 2602 of the Low-In-  
4 come Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C.  
5 8621) is amended by adding at the end the following:

6         “(f) There is authorized to be appropriated for pay-  
7 ments under this title, in addition to amounts appro-  
8 priated for distribution to all the States in accordance with  
9 section 2604 or to carry out section 2607A,  
10 \$10,000,000,000 for allocation to States under section  
11 2607C.”.

12         (b) SUPPLEMENTAL ALLOTMENTS FOR COVID-19  
13 RELIEF.—The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act  
14 of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.) is amended by inserting  
15 after section 2607B the following:

16   **“SEC. 2607C. SUPPLEMENTAL ALLOTMENTS FOR COVID-19**

17                   **RELIEF.**

18         “(a) ALLOTMENT OF FUNDS.—The Secretary may  
19 allocate amounts appropriated under section 2602(f) to  
20 provide supplementary funds to States to assist eligible  
21 households in accordance with this section.

22         “(b) FORMULA FOR DISTRIBUTION.—Distribution of  
23 amounts made available under this section shall be based  
24 on a formula developed by the Secretary that provides  
25 funding to States based on—

1           “(1) the amount allotted to the State under this  
2 title, other than section 2607A, in fiscal year 2021;  
3 and

4           “(2) the average unemployment rate in the  
5 State from January 31, 2020, through December  
6 31, 2020.

7        “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—

8           “(1) ASSISTANCE.—A State may use funds allo-  
9 cated to the State under this section to help eligible  
10 households in the State maintain home energy or  
11 electricity service, by providing to such households,  
12 in accordance with the plan submitted by the State  
13 under paragraph (2), 100 percent of the amount of  
14 any utility bill incurred during the COVID–19 pan-  
15 demic that is in arrears.

16           “(2) PLAN FOR DISBURSEMENT.—Not later  
17 than 60 days after the date of enactment of this sec-  
18 tion, each State shall submit to the Secretary a plan  
19 for providing assistance under paragraph (1) that  
20 prioritizes the restoration of terminated service and  
21 the prevention of service terminations, taking into  
22 consideration the total amount of debt in arrears of  
23 eligible households and any other factors that the  
24 State finds relevant.

1               “(3) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—A State  
2 may use not more than 15 percent of funds allocated  
3 to the State under this section for administrative ex-  
4 penses related to providing assistance under para-  
5 graph (1).

6               “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7               “(1) ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLD.—The term ‘eli-  
8 gible household’ means a household with a utility bill  
9 incurred during the COVID–19 pandemic that cer-  
10 tifies to the State (including through proof of job  
11 loss of a member of the household, such as a layoff  
12 or furlough notice or verification of application for  
13 unemployment benefits) that it cannot pay such util-  
14 ity bill because of economic distress caused by the  
15 COVID–19 pandemic.

16               “(2) UTILITY BILL.—The term ‘utility bill’  
17 means a bill charged to a household for home energy  
18 or electricity service.

19               “(3) UTILITY BILL INCURRED DURING THE  
20 COVID–19 PANDEMIC.—The term ‘utility bill incurred  
21 during the COVID–19 pandemic’ means a utility bill  
22 for service provided during the period during which  
23 the public health emergency declared by the Sec-  
24 retary of Health and Human Services under section  
25 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.

1       247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to  
2       COVID–19 (or any renewal of that declaration), is  
3       in effect.

4       “(e) TERMINATION.—

5           “(1) DATE.—The authority of the Secretary to  
6       allocate funds under this section, and the authority  
7       of a State to use such funds under subsection (c),  
8       shall expire on the date that is 1 year after the date  
9       of enactment of this section.

10      “(2) REMAINING FUNDS.—

11       “(A) UNALLOCATED FUNDS.—The Sec-  
12       retary may not allocate or otherwise use any  
13       funds appropriated under section 2602(f) that  
14       have not been allocated under this section by  
15       the date described in paragraph (1).

16       “(B) UNUSED FUNDS.—A State to which  
17       funds have been allocated under this section  
18       shall use any such funds, which have not been  
19       used under subsection (c) by the date described  
20       in paragraph (1), in the same manner as  
21       amounts allotted to the State under section  
22       2604.”.

23       (c) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date  
24       of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and

1 Human Services shall submit to Congress a report describ-  
2 ing—

3 (1) the number of households in each State that  
4 received assistance under subsection (c)(1) of section  
5 2607C of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance  
6 Act of 1981, and demographic information for such  
7 households, to the extent such information is avail-  
8 able;

9 (2) the total amount of assistance provided to  
10 households in each State under such subsection  
11 (c)(1);

12 (3) the total amount of funds used by States  
13 under subsection (c)(3) of such section 2607C; and

14 (4) any other information relating to the imple-  
15 mentation and effectiveness of such section, as de-  
16 termined appropriate by the Secretary.

